

**Ensuring Equitable Access to Funding
for All Birth-to-Five Classroom-Based Early Childhood
Programs**

**Illinois Early Learning Council Integration and Alignment Committee
Mixed Delivery System Ad Hoc Committee Report and Recommendations**

June 2019

Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	3
Background	6
BBSF Recommendation #1:.....	8
BBSF Recommendation #2:.....	8
BBSF Recommendation #3:.....	8
BBSF Recommendation #4:.....	8
Committee Charge	9
Current Status	9
Root Causes.....	14
Mixed Delivery System Lessons Learned from Other States	17
Lesson #1.....	17
Lesson #2.....	17
Lesson #3.....	18
Mixed Delivery System Ad Hoc Committee Recommendations	19
Recommendation #1.....	19
Recommendation #2.....	20
Recommendation #3.....	21
Recommendation #4.....	22
Proposed Next Steps.....	23
Appendices.....	24
Committee Members	24
Additional Data Reviewed.....	26
Acknowledgements.....	27
References	29

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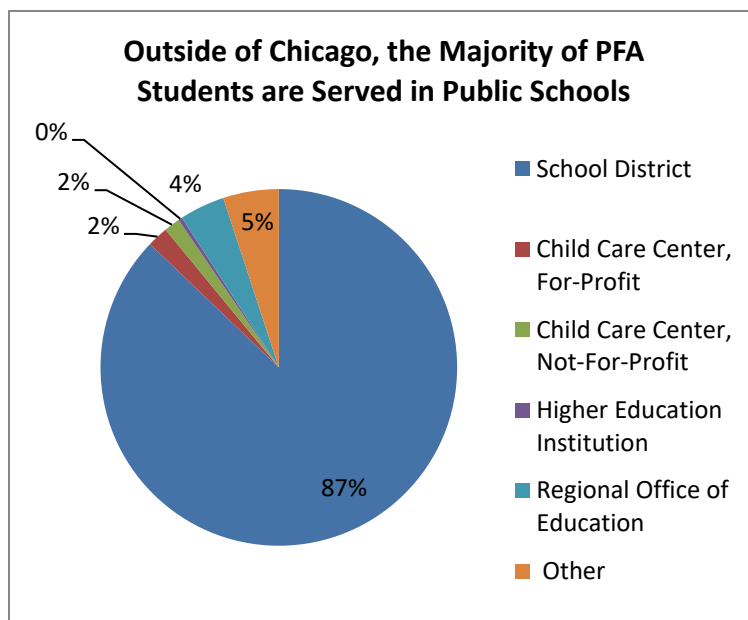
Executive Summary

The Mixed Delivery System Ad Hoc Committee (MDS AHC) is a committee of the Integration and Alignment Committee (IAC) of the Early Learning Council (ELC). **The MDS AHC was convened in 2018 and charged with addressing the issues programs and families face when developing and accessing a robust early childhood Mixed Delivery System (with services delivered in both schools and community-based settings like child care and Head Start centers) in Illinois.** The Committee is seeking action from the ELC Executive Committee to elevate the report and recommendations to the appropriate bodies in order to move the State in the right direction. The ELC recognizes that the system-as-is continues to present the field with challenges inhibiting expansion of a Mixed Delivery System and has attempted to address these challenges in the past. In 2014, the Blending, Braiding and Sustainable Funding (BBSF) Subcommittee of the ELC Integration and Alignment Committee produced a report examining challenges that community-based programs experienced as they tried to braid and blend multiple funding streams to provide high-quality early learning services. These challenges were, and continue to be, particularly acute for providers seeking to implement Preschool For All (PFA) and Prevention Initiative (PI) programs in community-based settings. **The MDS AHC recognized that the failure of the Preschool for All and Prevention Initiative funding streams to be integrated in more community-based settings is important because these funding streams have been the State's primary mechanism for raising quality in center-based child care.** The report provides more detail on the process of inquiry, the findings, and the recommendations.

In order to develop recommendations to address these barriers, the Committee engaged in a robust process of inquiry with other state systems, detailed data analysis of where and what programs are currently accessing multiple funding streams, and listened to a broad set of stakeholders on the challenges they face and the solutions they desire. The Committee talked with state early childhood experts in North Carolina, Georgia, New York and Pennsylvania. The MDS AHC facilitated four discussions with public and private Illinois agencies and early childhood providers from across Illinois that built on the recommendations developed by the BBSF Subcommittee.

The Committee found that:

- Preschool for All outside of Chicago is mostly provided by school districts.
- Children receiving Child Care Assistance typically do not participate in Preschool for All or Prevention Initiative.
- Most Head Start programs are not combined with the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP).
- Few children served with CCAP in child care centers attend ExceleRate Gold Circle of Quality Programs.



Together, these findings point to a troubling situation in which **children in low-income working families that need full-workday, year-round care are unlikely to be able to access the high-quality early learning programming that research shows to be most effective in supporting their kindergarten readiness.**

The MDS AHC identified nine overarching barriers to implementing and accessing a Mixed Delivery System in Illinois which include:

- **A lack of timely payments:** Community Based Organizations (CBOs) are typically not able to “front” the costs of providing services and wait for 6-9 months to begin receiving reimbursement.
- **Challenges in layering, blending and braiding funding streams:** Programs are confused about funding streams eligibility requirements and other guidelines and the required cost allocation is complex.
- **Lack of awareness:** Many programs are not aware they are eligible to participate in PFA/PI.
- **Lack of funding for non-ECBG programs to achieve high-quality:** Programs without PFA/PI funds often can’t demonstrate their ability to meet these funding streams’ high standards because they can’t afford to implement the staff qualifications and ratios required.
- **Lack of supports for child care programs to incrementally increase quality:** While the Child Care Resource & Referral system provides some quality supports, these are spread very thin across the State’s thousands of child care centers and homes.
- **Complex grant application process:** The application process for the ECBG grant can be difficult for CBOs to navigate, and few supports are in place to help potential applicants.
- **Uncertainty about grant funding:** Some CBOs express concerns about whether the funding for PFA/PI will be sustained year after year, and are discouraged by grant cycles that leave providers unsure about funding often until well into the start of the school year.

- **No state goals or accountability for building a Mixed Delivery System:** The current governance structure for early childhood in Illinois leaves unclear who has the responsibility and authority to ensure that PFA and PI are available through CBOs and that these programs appropriately meet the needs of all at-risk children, including those in working families that need full-workday, year-round care.
- **Limited community-level planning:** Currently, most communities in the State have no entity that has responsibility for ensuring the community has enough and the right mix of early childhood education and care services.

There were three lessons learned from the states that were studied: 1) a strong infrastructure and integrated governance structure is needed to effectively implement a Mixed Delivery System; 2) intensive support and community-level planning are essential for a successful Mixed Delivery System; 3) funding needs to be stable and robust enough to attract and retain a high-quality early childhood workforce.

After the MDS AHC reviewed enrollment data, discussed various root causes hindering a fully functional Mixed Delivery System, and spoke with other states, four comprehensive recommendations for policymakers and community leaders emerged as critical priorities to improve the Mixed Delivery System in Illinois to ensure that all children and families in Illinois have equitable access to high-quality early learning experiences.

Recommendation 1: Implement a funding mechanism that is timely, transparent and sustainable that Community-Based Organizations can access to deliver high-quality early care and education, meet evidence-based performance standards, and provide adequate compensation to teachers and staff.

Recommendation 2: Create a system to support Community-Based Organizations' participation and retention in Preschool for All and Prevention Initiative, focusing on incrementally improving staff qualifications and compensation, ratios, and instructional quality to build "readiness" to successfully meet rigorous and comprehensive quality standards of PFA and PI.

Recommendation 3: Strengthen and support robust community-level planning processes.

Recommendation 4: Develop and implement a governance structure that is given the formal authority and responsibility to lead the State's early childhood system.

The Committee has detailed the rationale behind each recommendation, a vision for the future of Illinois, and proposed next steps. Implementing the recommendations proposed is a first step in developing a fully functioning, accessible, and reliable Mixed Delivery System which is vital to the future of Illinois, its children and its families.

Ensuring Equitable Access to Funding for All Birth-to-Five Classroom-Based Early Childhood Programs

Background

Illinois' overarching vision for its early learning and development system is to ensure that every child in the State enters kindergarten safe, healthy, happy, and ready to succeed and eager to learn. To achieve this goal, Illinois has developed consensus around its vision of a system of universal supports that should be offered to every child and family, as well as the targeted interventions that some children and families¹ must receive to support early learning and development and school readiness.

This vision depends on a well-coordinated, easy-to-navigate system through which every family with children, beginning prenatally, has access to: ongoing preventive health care, including appropriate well-child care, screenings, and immunizations; anticipatory guidance on the development of their child, provided through their primary health care provider as well as through family-relevant educational material; periodic developmental screenings to determine whether their child may be exhibiting developmental delays that warrant intervention services and inform families about their child's individual development; information that helps families identify high-quality providers of early childhood education and care; high-quality preschool and alignment of instruction and supports as children transition to kindergarten and beyond. In order to effectively meet families' needs and preferences, it is important that the early care and learning system is a "Mixed Delivery System," which means that services are provided in many different settings (e.g., homes, centers, and schools) and under varied auspices (public school systems, not-for-profit and for-profit providers).

Access to high-quality, formal early learning programs is central to Illinois' vision for supporting the development of young children. The benefits of accessible high-quality early childhood programming are extensive and long-lasting. However, research has shown that these positive outcomes are produced consistently only by programs that meet rigorous quality standards, including well-qualified and adequately-compensated staff, a research-based curriculum, and effective family engagement supports². Illinois' Day Care Licensing Standards are focused on health and safety rather than research-based, rigorous quality standards. Programs that are funded only to meet these standards may struggle

¹ The Illinois Early Learning Council has established "priority populations" that are recognized as often needing additional supports in the early childhood years. These include children of teen parents; children experiencing homelessness; children in families in poverty or deep poverty; children/families with Department of Children and Family Services involvement; children with disabilities; children of migrant or seasonal workers; children in families with low caregiver education attainment; children in families that face barriers based on culture, language, and religion; children of a parent or legal guardian with a disability; children/families with refugee or asylum status; and children in families who face barriers due to immigration status.

² Hirokazu Yoshikawa et al., (October 2013) "Investing in our Future: The Evidence Base on Preschool Education" New York and Washington: Foundation for Child Development and Society for Research in Child Development;; Phillips, D. A>, Lipsey, M. W., Dodge, K. A, et al. (2017) *Puzzling it Out: The Current State of Scientific Knowledge on Pre-Kindergarten Effects, A Consensus Statement* The Brookings Institution and Duke Center for Child and Family Policy.

to implement the quality programming necessary to positively impact young children's developmental trajectories and effectively support the school readiness of children, especially children from lower-income families or those who are otherwise at-risk for poor school readiness.

In 2006, the Illinois Early Learning Council released "Preschool for All: High-Quality Early Education for All of Illinois' Children." This report laid out the vision for the implementation of the nation's first voluntary state preschool program with the goal to serve all three- and four-year-olds, while expanding services for at-risk children under age three. The report envisioned a Mixed Delivery System for these services:

Preschool for All would empower families with a range of choices among high-quality programs and settings, including child care centers, family child care homes, Head Start sites, and schools. Preschool for All funding would be available to a wide variety of organizations, including public and private schools, child care centers and licensed family child care homes, private preschools, park districts, faith-based organizations, and other community-based agencies. Families would know that when they choose a Preschool for All program, they could count on at least 12.5 hours per week of high-quality preschool at no additional cost to them. (p. 16)

In the 12 years since it was established in Illinois legislation³, the Preschool for All (PFA) program has experienced many successes and a few setbacks. After several years of rapid growth, the state budget crises forced the program to contract during the Great Recession and enrollment has only recently regained its peak level. Notably, while many child care centers and Head Start programs joined the PFA system over the last decade, the program outside of Chicago remains heavily dominated by part-day programs in school-based settings. In FY2017, for example, more than 85% of non-Chicago PFA students were served in public schools⁴. In contrast, in the city of Chicago, where the Chicago Public Schools has long subcontracted with child care and Head Start providers, nearly 35% of PFA students were served in community-based organizations, most of which provided full-work-day, year-round programs⁵. In addition, the birth-to-three focused Prevention Initiative (PI) funding stream predominantly funds home visiting services, with only about 21% of children being served in the Prevention Initiative Center Based program model⁶. In contrast, in Chicago, about 50% of PI participants were served in the Center Based model⁵.

The fact that Preschool for All and Prevention Initiative funding streams have not been integrated into more community-based settings is important because these funding streams have been the State's primary mechanism for raising quality in center-based child care. Private tuition rates and Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) reimbursement rates—and even the tiered reimbursement rates provided through ExceleRate Illinois, the state's Quality Rating and Improvement System—are typically not sufficient to fund programs to employ highly-qualified and well-compensated staff, to provide adequate learning materials and physical space, and to maintain optimal group sizes and staff-to-child ratios.

³ Illinois Public Act 096-0948; School Code 105 ILCS 5/2-3.71

⁴ Analysis of data from Illinois Early Childhood Asset Map (IECAM)

⁵ Data from FY2017 report from CPS to ISBE

⁶ Erikson Institute (2019) Illinois Risk and Reach Report

Without the implementation of PFA and PI in child care settings, the State is falling short of providing equitable access to high-quality early learning to children whose families need them to be served in full-work-day, year-round programs. Head Start programs are funded to provide robust family engagement services, comprehensive health and nutrition services, dental services, social services, education and disability services. Funding for these programs over the past two decades has not kept pace with the rising expectations for higher staff qualifications^{7,8}. Head Start programs are now being encouraged to move their preschool programming to at least a full school day, but many may need Preschool for All funding to support this extension from their traditional part-day model.

The Illinois Early Learning Council (ELC) has been tracking challenges with the implementation of the Mixed Delivery System over the years. In 2014, the Blending, Braiding and Sustainable Funding (BBSF) Subcommittee of the ELC Integration and Alignment Committee produced a report examining challenges that programs experienced as they tried to implement PFA and PI in community-based settings. For example, the report found there was a lack of clarity about how the PFA/PI funding streams should be used in combination with the Child Care Assistance Program and/or Head Start/Early Head Start, how costs should be allocated across funding streams, and what implementation models were allowable and recommended. The BBSF Subcommittee developed several recommendations to strengthen policy and implementation of PFA and PI in community-based settings. To date, most of these recommendations are still applicable but have yet to be implemented.

BBSF Recommendation #1: Increase coordination of administrative requirements and reporting obligations across early childhood funding streams.

BBSF Recommendation #2: Each state early childhood system must communicate jointly, in writing, the value, purpose and methods for blending and braiding funding streams.

BBSF Recommendation #3: Align staff qualifications across funding streams and invest in workforce development.

BBSF Recommendation #4: Provide funding support that promotes community collaboration and increases quality early childhood programming across a community.

In spring 2018, the entire Early Childhood Block Grant funding stream for programs outside of Chicago was open to re-competition, as is periodically required by the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) policy. In the development of the Request for Proposals and scoring rubrics, as well as in the communication and guidance provided to existing and potential new grantees by the ISBE Early Childhood Division, the value of community-based organizations (including child care centers and Head Start programs) participating in PFA and PI was emphasized. The re-competition led to a slightly higher

⁷ Whitebook, M., McLean, C., Austin, L.J.E., & Edwards, B. (2018). *Early Childhood Workforce Index – 2018*. Berkeley, CA: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley. Retrieved from <http://cscce.berkeley.edu/topic/early-childhood-workforce-index/2018/>

⁸ Friedman-Krauss, A. h., Barnett, W. S., Garver, K. A., et al. (2019) *The State of Preschool – 2018: State Preschool Yearbook*. New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research

percentage of slots being provided outside of schools in FY2019, but it is still a small fraction of the overall system.

Committee Charge

The Early Learning Council recognized the need to identify and address the underlying root causes of the low participation of community-based providers—including child care centers and Head Start programs—in the Preschool for All program, and its birth-to-three counterpart, the Prevention Initiative Center-Based program. Building upon the BBSF Subcommittee work, the Integration and Alignment Committee convened a Mixed Delivery System Ad Hoc Committee in September 2018. The purpose was to revisit the BBSF Subcommittee recommendations, elevate those that are still applicable but unimplemented, and develop new recommendations to support the vision of an early childhood Mixed Delivery System in Illinois. The Subcommittee’s charge was to:

- Document the extent to which Preschool for All, Prevention Initiative-Center Based, Head Start, and Child Care services are being delivered in Community-Based Organizations across the State.
- Document the implications of the current state of implementation, including the patterns of participation in Preschool for All, Prevention Initiative, Head Start, and Child Care by race and geography, to identify potential equity issues in the current implementation.
- Identify policy barriers, including program model expectations, restrictions on funding use, eligibility requirements, and other issues, that impede the development of PFA and PI-center based programs in Community-Based Organizations to access these funds.
- Identify supports and resources that might be needed to increase participation of community-based programs in Preschool for All and Prevention Initiative-center based programming.
- Develop recommendations for policy changes, model refinements, and new supports.

The Committee was given a short timeline with the goal to report the recommendations to the ELC’s Integration and Alignment Committee by early 2019. The Mixed Delivery System Ad Hoc Committee recommendations reflect major themes that were identified in meetings that suggest changes needed at the structural, policy, program, and practice levels. The recommendations are intended to provide guidance to the Illinois Early Learning Council, the Governor’s Office of Early Childhood Development and Illinois’ public funding administrators in their efforts to build a comprehensive and aligned mixed delivery early childhood system in Illinois.

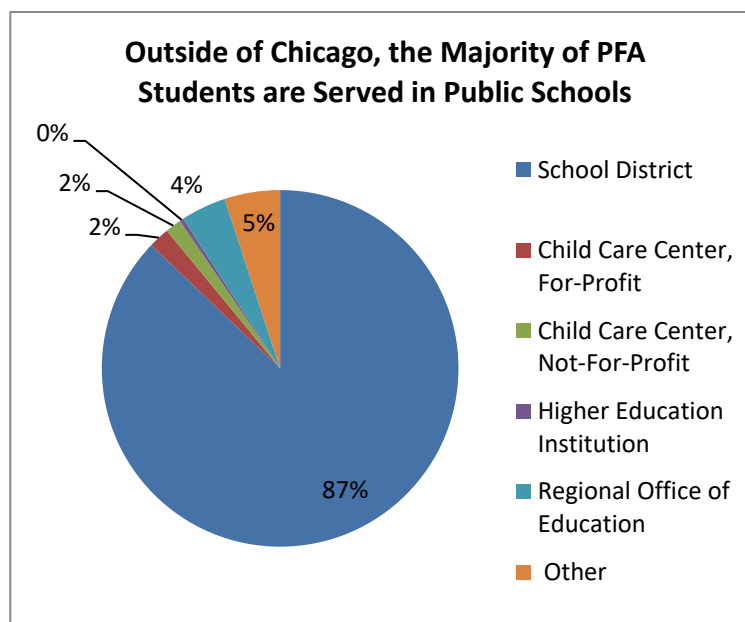
Note: For purposes of this report, the term “Community- Based Organizations” refers to non-school based settings that provide Preschool for All, Preschool for All-Expansion, Prevention Initiative Center-Based, Child Care, Head Start and/or Early Head Start Center-Based programming.

Current Status

The Committee began by reviewing data about the current funding capacity in Preschool for All, Prevention Initiative, Head Start, Early Head Start, and the Child Care Assistance Program. Key findings include:

Funding for Preschool for All outside of Chicago is mostly provided by school districts: In Chicago, roughly ⅓ of children enrolled in Preschool for All are served in community-based settings. In most of these settings, the PFA funding is layered with CCAP and/or Head Start to provide a full-workday, year-round program designed to meet the needs of working families. Despite Illinois' longstanding vision and progress in providing high-quality early education through a Mixed Delivery System; there are currently few community-based programs outside of the city of Chicago that provide Preschool for All and/or Prevention Initiative programs and services. Indeed, in FY17, more than 85% of PFA students outside of Chicago were served in school-based programs. Most of these programs are part-day, and were therefore difficult for working families to take advantage of to meet their family's need.

Figure 1



Children receiving Child Care Assistance typically do not participate in Preschool for All or Prevention Initiative: The Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP), administered by the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS), provides subsidies to ensure that lower-income families can access safe and nurturing care for their children while parents are working or attending school. The Illinois State Longitudinal Data System (ILDS) project has developed a matched database of participants in CCAP and in PFA. Data analysis shows there is relatively little overlap in participation across these funding streams, with few CCAP children enrolling in PFA, and few PFA children receiving CCAP. This is surprising, as these funding streams are targeted toward largely the same children: low-income children in the case of CCAP, and children at-risk of school failure in the case of PFA (low family income is one of the most predictive risk factors for poor school success).

The small amount of overlap in participation in these two funding streams corroborates the finding above that few PFA services (especially outside of Chicago) are delivered in child care programs. In addition, it shows that few families are combining Preschool for All with some type of “wrap-around” child care (in a family child care home, Family/Friend/Neighbor setting, or child care center) supported by CCAP.

Figure 2 demonstrates the small overlap between those receiving CCAP funding and those only receiving PFA funding. Table 1 shows that this small overlap has been the case for several years.

Most preschool-aged children who receive Child Care Assistance do not participate in Preschool for All or Prevention Initiative.

Figure 2

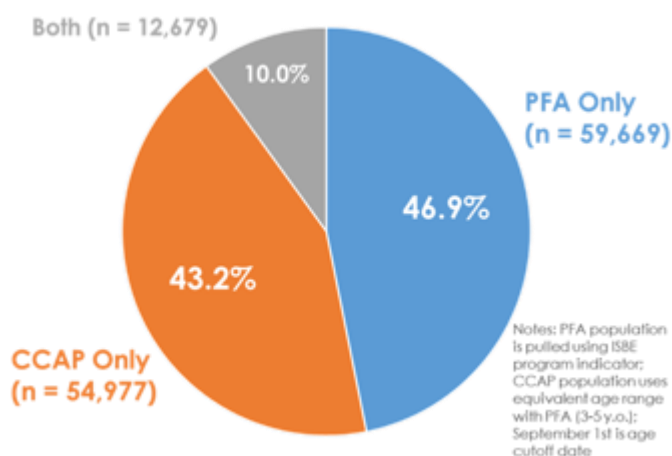


Table 1: 2016- Percentage and number of 3-5 year olds in PFA and/or CCAP (N = 127,325)

	PFA Only	CCAP Only	Both	Total (N)
2012	44.3%	44.1%	11.6%	145,227
2013	45.2%	43.6%	11.2%	143,700
2014	44.1%	44.9%	11.0%	141,226
2015	42.4%	46.4%	11.3%	140,036
2016	46.9%	43.2%	10.0%	127,325

Most Head Start programs are not combined with the Child Care Assistance Program: The Committee reviewed the most recent Head Start Program Information Report (PIR) data, which was from 2018. This data showed that of the 35,375 funded “slots” for Head Start in Illinois, only 20% were in full-workday, year-round programs. The PIR also showed that approximately 22% of Head Start program slots were in

programs that layered Head Start funding with CCAP. Until Head Start data are integrated into the State Longitudinal Data System, it is the best estimate we have of the layering of Head Start with CCAP. The PIR data does not indicate how many programs layered Head Start with Preschool for All or Prevention Initiative funding.

Together, the ILDS data and the PIR data suggest that the majority of children receiving CCAP at age three and four are not participating in programs where CCAP funding is layered with either PFA or Head Start. This is important, as CCAP funding is not sufficient to support high-quality, educationally enriching programs that meet research-based recommendations for staff qualifications and comprehensive services.

Few children served with CCAP in child care centers attend ExceleRate Gold Circle of Quality Programs:

The ExceleRate Illinois Gold Circle of Quality was designed to articulate a research-based definition of “high-quality” early childhood education and care. School district preschool programs, child care centers, and Head Start programs are able to obtain an ExceleRate Illinois (ExceleRate) rating⁹. The majority of Preschool for All and Head Start programs meet the Gold Circle of Quality. In contrast, only about 20% of children who are served in child care centers using CCAP funding are in programs that have received the Gold Circle of Quality. CCAP rate add-ons, in the absence of other funding streams, are not sufficient to support the typical cost of providing Gold-level services.

Table 2: Children in Center-Based Child Care subsidized by the Child Care Assistance Program

	City of Chicago	Suburban Cook	Downstate	Total
Children 0-3 in CCAP	11,638	6,248	15,270	33,156
# in Gold Circle of Quality Programs	2,050	1,551	3,311	6,912
% in Gold Circle of Quality Programs	17.6%	24.8%	21.7%	20.8%
Children 3-5 in CCAP	13,984	8,024	17,893	39,901
# in Gold Circle of Quality Programs	3,303	1,869	3,570	8,742
% in Gold Circle of Quality Programs	23.6%	23.3%	20.0%	21.9%
Total Children 0-5 in CCAP	25,622	14,272	33,163	73,057
# in Gold Circle of Quality Programs	5,353	3,420	6,881	15,654
% in Gold Circle of Quality Programs	20.9%	24.0%	20.7%	21.4%

Number of children on CCAP (0-3 and 3-5) are in ExceleRate Gold Circle of Quality programs

- CCAP Data (Children in Center-Based CCAP) – August 2018 CCAP Payments file from IDHS
- ExceleRate Data (CCAP Children in Center-Based Gold Circle of Quality Programs) – INCCRRA report run 9/22/18

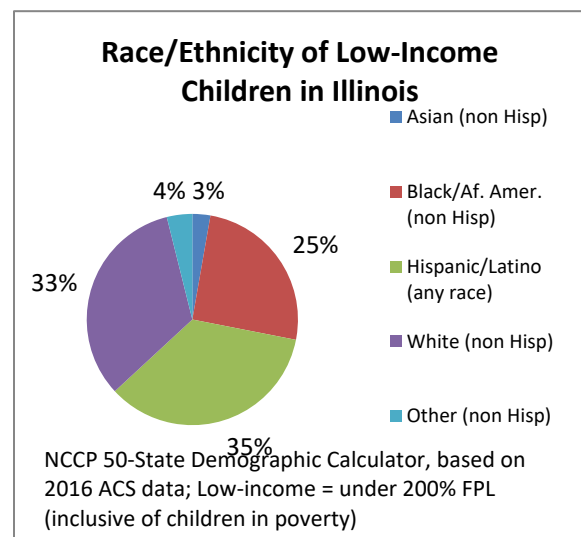
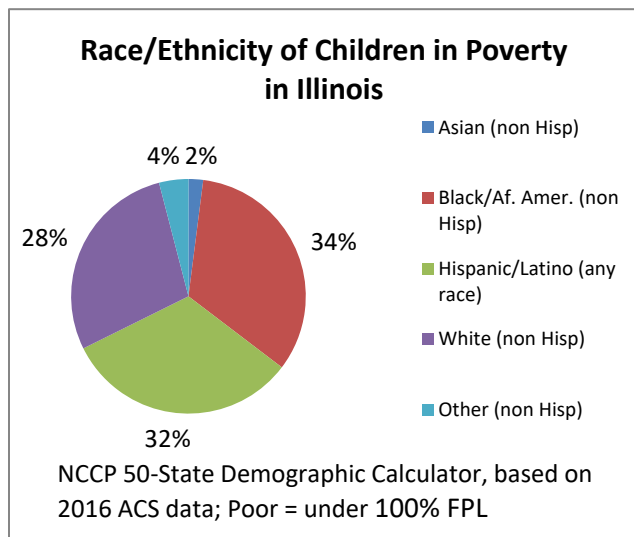
⁹ Licensed family child care homes can also obtain an ExceleRate rating. The Committee did not review family child care services, as this was outside of the Committee’s charge.

- Data is provided when a program applies for ExceleRate or submits their annual report, which means some of the children included in the number of CCAP children served may be from the prior year.

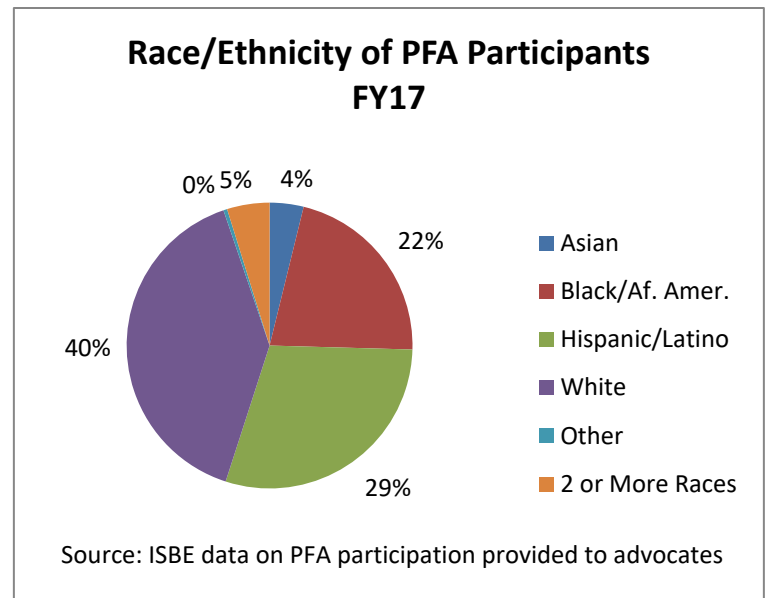
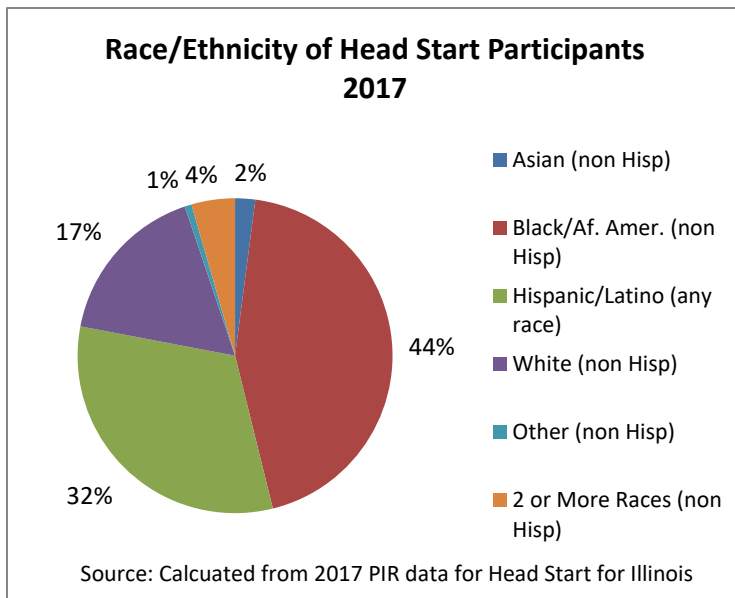
Race and Ethnicity Data

Existing sources of data for publicly-funded early care and education programs in Illinois provide only limited insight into how patterns of participation in these various programs varies by race and ethnicity. ISBE and IDHS do not share a consistent approach to categorizing race and ethnicity, and some data sources have particularly poor reporting of participation data broken out by race and ethnicity. Nevertheless, it is helpful to look at available data to understand participation patterns.

The following graphs provide an overview of the racial and ethnic composition of the population of children under age six in lower-income families (defined for this graph as income below 200% FPL)¹⁰, and of the children participating in Preschool for All and Head Start. Comparable data is not currently available for CCAP.



¹⁰ National Center for Child Poverty 50-State Demographic Calculator, data retrieved from <http://www.nccp.org/tools/demographics/>



Note: Because the race and ethnicity data was not available for the Committee to review during its meetings, this information is presented here without further analysis or discussion. The Committee recommends further exploration of racial patterns in participation in early childhood services in Illinois.

Root Causes

After reviewing the current state of our early childhood care and education system, the Committee concluded that the system is not functioning as originally envisioned when Preschool for All was launched. In particular, families who need full-workday, year-round care for their children have little access to programs that meet high-quality standards, especially outside the city of Chicago. The Committee identified multiple factors that have impeded the growth of Preschool for All and Prevention Initiative Center Based as a Mixed Delivery System that extensively incorporates community-based settings. These include:

Lack of timely payments: The ECBG was designed to provide grantees with the resources they need to begin services on time each school year. In the early years of the Preschool for All program, for example, grantees typically received an installment of funding in the summer months, and received additional payments as they documented expenditures during the year. Since the State's ongoing budget crisis began in the early part of this decade, grantees have waited up to nine months after the beginning of the fiscal year to receive their first grant payment. While these payment delays have been difficult for school districts, they have been especially problematic for community-based organizations that typically do not have the reserves or sources of credit to "front" the operating costs of the program for several months at a time.

Challenges in layering, blending and braiding funding streams: As documented by the Blending, Braiding and Sustainable Funding Subcommittee in 2012, programs that seek to combine PFA/PI, EHS/HS and CCAP face many challenges. These funding streams have differing eligibility requirements that make it difficult to find participants who are eligible for all funding streams and the children who need the services the most are excluded from accessing the programs. For example, a family may need to have all parents working to be eligible for CCAP, but also have a family income below the Federal Poverty Guidelines to be eligible for Head Start. In addition, a lack of consistent and concise guidelines across program models presents a significant challenge for program administrators. Directors and staff report they are unsure which requirements need to be met for each program model and that uncertainty is compounded when programs offer multiple program models. There have been efforts to provide consistent guidance to program administrators to support their participation within a Mixed Delivery System. ISBE provides program consultants that assist their assigned programs when questions arise, and Head Start program officers assist their grantees. Program leaders report, however, that they can end up spending inordinate amounts of time negotiating budgets with state and federal administrators because there is not clear, unified guidance on cost allocation or other aspects of how to integrate funding stream requirements. (See the BBSF Subcommittee report for additional details on the challenges identified, few of which have been addressed by state agencies.)

Lack of awareness: Committee members noted that many community-based organizations are unaware of the Preschool for All and Prevention Initiative funding streams, or do not know their program is eligible to apply to participate in the program and supplement their current funding. For example, child care providers may not know they can apply directly to ISBE for ECBG funding. Other program leaders may be aware of the funding streams, but are not clear about the benefits of participating. Programs may believe that program standards, such as the PFA requirement that the lead teacher in each classroom have a Professional Educator License (PEL) with an Early Childhood Endorsement or the small class sizes required by Prevention Initiative, are too difficult to meet or they will not receive enough additional funding from the Early Childhood Block Grant to cover the additional costs they will incur. Finally, programs may not recognize the additional value to the families they serve and to their staff of participating in these funding streams.

Lack of funding for non-ECBG programs to achieve high-quality: Programs that are funded primarily through CCAP and/or parent fees, without an additional funding source like PFA/PI or HS/EHS, typically do not have enough revenue to cover the full cost of quality features such as highly-qualified staff, small group sizes and low child-to-teacher ratios. As a result, these programs are often unable to attain or sustain the Gold Circle of Quality in ExceleRate. The current tiered reimbursement for Gold Circle programs—15% above the regular reimbursement rate—covers only a small fraction of the additional costs programs incur in meeting higher quality standards. There is no source of funding to cover quality-related costs for tuition-paying families.

Lack of supports for child care programs to incrementally increase quality: Committee members noted the Preschool for All and Prevention Initiative program standards are a “big leap” from the minimal licensing standards required in Illinois. Currently, there is little support for programs making incremental gains towards the high standards required when programs access ECBG funds. Programs struggle to get

“ready” to apply for PFA and PI and may lack the business practices and instructional leadership structure that will support success with these funding streams. In addition, due to the lack of infrastructure and staff in the ISBE Early Childhood Education Division community-based programs participating in PFA/PI feel they need more support with implementation challenges and may be at risk of losing their grant for noncompliance with the program standards.

Complex grant application process: The applications for Preschool for All and Prevention Initiative funding require writing lengthy narratives describing the proposed program and completing a budget and budget narrative with a format that is unfamiliar to those who don’t work in public schools. In 2018, a technical assistance initiative was funded by the McCormick and Irving Harris Foundations to provide technical assistance which targeted high needs communities that may not have the programmatic infrastructure or capacity to design a program and respond to the ECBG Request for Proposal (RFP). The challenges that surfaced among technical assistance recipients included a lack of understanding of program requirements and limited grant writing skills. Smaller programs often have program administrators that are managing multiple priorities and may not have received professional development related to grant writing. Programs that have more resources also noted they found the process difficult and confusing. Potential grantees need individualized support and professional development in program design and in grant writing to successfully participate in PFA and PI grant competitions.

Uncertainty about grant funding: The ECBG is subject to periodic re-competition per ISBE policy, as the system is not fully funded and the State wishes to preserve the flexibility to redistribute funds to meet potentially changing patterns of need across communities. However, Committee members noted the possibility of losing a grant through re-competition discourages many community-based organizations from participating in PFA and PI. In addition, programs are reluctant to apply for the program because funding decisions are frequently made in late summer or even well into the fall, making it difficult for programs to start up the school year with the staffing and program structure they will need to meet the required standards. The lack of certainty about future program funding also leads to difficulty for programs in retaining staff, especially those with PELs who may choose to move to school districts and primary grade positions that have more secure funding, better compensation and access to the state pension system.

No state goals or accountability for building a Mixed Delivery System: The State has not established any metrics or goals for the percentage of PFA students that should be served in schools, Head Start programs, and child care centers. With the ECBG administered by ISBE and the Child Care Assistance Program and Head Start State Collaboration Office administered by IDHS, it is not clear who is responsible for ensuring that challenges to child care and Head Start programs participating in PFA and PI are addressed. Similarly, it’s not clear who is responsible for implementing the State strategy of layering PFA and PI onto CCAP so that children who receive CCAP are able to access child care centers that meet high-quality standards.

Limited community-level planning: In most communities across the state, there is no community collaboration or other entity that has responsibility for planning new or expanded early childhood

services. As a result, there is no assessment of the need for school-based or community-based programs, or of the need for programs that combine high-quality standards with full-workday, year-round care. Community level assessments are needed to plan around and assess saturation of services available across funding streams- Head Start, Early Childhood Block Grant, and Child Care Assistance Programs. Collaboration and program leaders need professional development and technical assistance to build their capacity to design multiple program options that address families' needs, including, for example, both the needs of families where parents are working traditional hours and those who work mostly nights and weekends.

Mixed Delivery System Lessons Learned from Other States

The Mixed Delivery System Ad Hoc Committee wanted to learn from the experiences of other states that are implementing their state's preschool program in both schools and community-based settings. With assistance from Illinois' BUILD consultant and the Ounce of Prevention Policy Team, four states were identified, an interview protocol was developed and conference calls were convened with state leaders who were implementing a Mixed Delivery System within these states. The state leaders represented Georgia, New York, Pennsylvania, and North Carolina. Three themes, or "lessons learned," emerged across the states that the Committee found relevant for Illinois.

Lesson #1

A strong infrastructure and an integrated governance structure is needed to effectively implement a Mixed Delivery System.

- ❖ North Carolina's neutral and consolidated local governance structure allowed for county-level coordination of their entire system.
- ❖ Georgia's Department of Early Learning, which administers both the state preschool program and child care assistance, is able to embed an equity lens across the system through planning, monitoring, and a central internal validation process.

Lesson #2

Intensive support and community-level planning are essential for a successful Mixed Delivery System, and minimum requirements for services to be provided by community-based organizations can be helpful.

- ❖ North Carolina provides funding and supports for robust community-level planning through their Smart Start system.
- ❖ States that set a mandate for community-based provider's participation in a Mixed Delivery System have found this to be a successful strategy. For example, New York created a mandate for at least 10% of investment to be made in non-school-based settings, which led to 57% of their Universal Pre-Kindergarten "slots" being provided by community-based organizations.

- ❖ Mentorship and technical assistance opportunities are essential for community-based programs to improve quality and prepare to meet and sustain rigorous program standards. However, many states noted they continually struggle with insufficient capacity for technical assistance.
- ❖ Pennsylvania's Rising STARS Mentorship Program occurs alongside intentional community outreach. Rising STARS pairs an experienced STAR 3 or 4 program director (the Mentor) with a STAR 1 or 2 program director (the mentee) to help develop the skills and knowledge base to enhance their program's quality and promote professional development and growth. The program is a continuous quality improvement support to move programs in Pennsylvania from a STAR 1 to STAR 2 rating or from a STAR 2 to a STAR 3 rating.
- ❖ In New York, many small districts do not have the capacity to submit their own Request for Proposal (RFP) for the Universal Pre-K funding stream. As a result, the State is hoping to provide technical assistance centers for small districts to receive the support that is needed.
- ❖ Communities need to be supported in addressing equity issues. For example, Georgia provides communities with analyses of the extent to which children and families with various characteristics (race, age of child, family income, etc.) are accessing services.

Lesson #3

Funding needs to be stable and robust enough to attract and retain a highly-qualified early childhood workforce.

- ❖ In Pennsylvania, teachers in community-based organizations (including child care centers) must be paid the same amount as local public school teachers as a requirement of participating in their state pre-k program. Despite this mandate for salary parity, Pennsylvania continues to experience a workforce that prefers teaching in the public school system, which includes a pension and better benefits.
- ❖ In New York, compensation parity continues to be an issue. An advocacy campaign and specific recommendations are being developed to address this problem.
- ❖ None of the selected states reported payment delays that forced programs to be responsible for paying staff and services only to receive reimbursements months later. All noted that they would anticipate such delays would dramatically reduce participation by community-based programs in their state preschool program.

Mixed Delivery System Ad Hoc Committee Recommendations

Recommendation #1

Implement a funding mechanism that is timely, transparent and sustainable that Community-Based Organizations can access to deliver high-quality early care and education, meet evidence-based performance standards, and provide adequate compensation to teachers and staff.

Rationale

Currently, funding levels and funding mechanisms for the Child Care Assistance Program and (to a lesser extent) Head Start do not support programs to provide staff salaries that are commensurate with the qualifications required. (See the Transforming the Early Childhood Workforce report for additional details on the challenges identified, which this Committee supports.) CBOs cannot afford to meet rigorous staff qualifications and other quality standards with current CCAP reimbursement and/or private tuition rates, and as a result struggle to prepare to engage in the PFA/PI system. Use of multiple funding streams presents its own challenges, including varying eligibility rules, target populations, reporting requirements, budgets, and eligible expenditures. There is a lack of transparency and timeliness as it relates to funding. Programs should receive reimbursements on time and accountability measures should be built into the system. Many programs do not have the ability to sustain their programming if funding is denied or delayed.

Vision for the Future

In order for children in all birth-to-five settings to access to deliver higher-quality programs (the attainment of the ExceleRate Illinois Gold Circle of Quality), Illinois needs to fully fund the cost of providing high-quality early learning for children. Currently, the per child funding varies dramatically across Preschool for All/Prevention Initiative, Head Start/Early Head Start, and the Child Care Assistance Program. Funding needs to match what quality programming actually costs and what research supports. Monitoring of programs and technical assistance needs to be strengths-based as a starting point in recognizing a programs' needs and areas for continuous quality improvement to meet higher quality standards.

Adequate and stable funding is needed to support programs as they increase quality; which includes compensation that helps teacher and staff retention within CBOs and minimize losing employees to school-based programs. In addition, alignment between program funding streams, strengthening program capacity and systems is also needed.

Proposed Next Steps:

- ❖ Develop cost models to determine the real cost of providing full-day, year-round services that meet the PFA and PI standards in child care centers and Head Start programs.
- ❖ Develop funding allocation formulas, including tiered reimbursement for child care programs, that are adequate to cover the real cost of quality services.

- ❖ Evaluate whether changes are needed to the current funding model of competitive grants that are re-bid every five years to maximize the predictability of funding. In addition, the State needs to ensure there are not delays in funding disbursement and that CBOs are not expected to wait months to be reimbursed for expenditures.
- ❖ Develop and execute an advocacy campaign to ask for a funding increase to meet the full cost of quality and access for all eligible children.
- ❖ Develop funding allocation formulas for K-12 schools to ensure special education services are delivered in the least restrictive environment in CBOs. In other words, “pushed-in” to the center classrooms.

Recommendation #2

Create a system to support Community-Based Organizations’ participation and retention in Preschool for All and Prevention Initiative, focusing on incrementally improving staff qualifications and compensation, ratios, and instructional quality to build “readiness” to successfully meet rigorous and comprehensive quality standards of PFA and PI.

Rationale

A robust infrastructure is currently not available to support CBOs to successfully engage in an early childhood Mixed Delivery System and ultimately increased program quality. Hiring and retaining qualified teachers and staff as well as increasing program quality requires time and resources that many smaller CBOs do not have. The current Child Care Resource and Referral system tends to focus its supports on helping providers meet basic health and safety standards or meeting specific needs like early childhood mental health consultation and is not sufficiently resourced to support child care providers in the intensive process of preparing to implement a PFA or PI program. Similarly, the Head Start technical assistance system focuses on supporting grantees to implement the Head Start Performance Standards and is generally not focused on helping programs engage in the ECBG funding stream. A focused initiative to support providers in preparing for PFA/PI needs to be developed and implemented, and it should include funding to support incremental increases in staffing and staff qualifications as programs move toward PFA/PI readiness. Additionally, individualized support and technical assistance necessary for program administrators to have an increased understanding of the PFA/PI program requirements and how to manage the combining of funding streams is also needed. These enhanced supports could be built on the foundation already present in the CCR&R and Head Start technical assistance systems (e.g. Illinois Head Start Association).

Vision for the Future

Regardless of the setting in which they are taught--child care center, Head Start program or public school—all children should receive high-quality early learning experiences that will prepare them for success in kindergarten and beyond. Illinois needs a robust infrastructure to support Community-Based Organizations in meeting the quality standards. This support system should be individualized and responsive to be both strengths-based and relationship-based.

Proposed Next Steps:

- ❖ Design and implement a new system of supports that will prepare community-based organizations—including child care centers and Head Start programs— to participate in the Preschool for All and Prevention Initiative funding streams. This system should be jointly developed by IDHS and ISBE, with participation of the Head Start State Collaboration Office, with leadership from GOECD.
- ❖ Develop mentoring programs where more experienced program administrators or a network of administrators can support each other and support new programs.
- ❖ Offer ongoing support and technical assistance related to promising business practices, such as effective models for allocating funding streams and structuring programs to take advantage of the strengths and challenges of various funding streams.
- ❖ Continue to address workforce issues that impact program capacity and quality.

Recommendation #3**Strengthen and support robust community-level planning processes.****Rationale**

Planning for early childhood programming in most communities across Illinois is currently reactive and occurs in siloes and does not take full advantage of input from local families and providers in communities. As a result, there tends to be an uneven distribution of slots and no clear picture of where slots are needed within high-need communities to serve children who would most benefit from high-quality early childhood programming.

Communities are best positioned to determine which children are not being served, which program models would meet their needs best, and which entities (including schools and community-based organizations) can best provide these services. However, few communities currently have adequate collaborative planning structures for early childhood.

Vision for the Future

Illinois needs a proactive and collaborative statewide system that is responsive to the needs of local communities, building on the existing Child Care Resource and Referral Networks, Local Interagency Councils and All Our Kids Networks. Programs and community collaborations need to participate in robust planning across funders in order to have effective partnerships. Ongoing community engagement, monitoring, and evaluation are imperative at both the state and local levels. An accurate and comprehensive profile of where slots are needed and what community collaborations exist is needed. This will lead to targeted support for high-need communities that may not currently have a community collaboration and/or that lack capacity to plan for expanded and improved services. Adequate funding will be necessary to support community-level planning and collaboration.

Proposed Next Steps:

- ❖ Include Head Start, Early Head Start, and the Child Care Assistance Program data in system-level planning for the Early Childhood Block Grant in order to make informed and data-driven decisions on slot allocation and funding of new programs through this critical funding stream.
- ❖ Develop a vision and universal principles that are customized to meet community needs and engage community stakeholders in decisions that affect their community.
- ❖ Produce guidelines for community-level planning (developed by the Community Systems and Development Subcommittee of the Integration and Alignment Committee) that are focused on ensuring that a range of high-quality program options—including those supporting full-day, year-round care—are available in every community.
- ❖ Develop guiding principles and provide resources and supports for communities that currently do not have collaborations.

Recommendation #4

Develop and implement a governance structure that is given the formal authority and responsibility to lead the State’s early childhood system.

Rationale

Currently, funding for early childhood services is fragmented. Despite efforts by the Illinois Early Learning Council, the Governor’s Office of Early Childhood Development and state agencies, there remains a persistent lack of coordination at the state level and across systems. There is minimal alignment across funding streams regarding required quality standards, program eligibility, method of funding (e.g., grants, contracts or vouchers) or even goals of the funding streams and funded services. As a result, those closest to children and families carry the burden of navigating a complex system of funding and compliance that drains time and energy away from their primary purpose of providing quality early childhood services and family supports.

Vision for the Future

Illinois needs to create a coordinated governance approach to provide a uniform structure and guidance for all early learning and care funding streams and to ensure timeliness of funding. This structure will promote efficiency, effectiveness and high-quality programming, and will increase alignment and remove unhelpful barriers to program participation. Most critically, this governance structure will align responsibility and authority for ensuring that all children have equitable access to programs that meet high-quality standards.

A governance structure that provides strong coordinated oversight will minimize the concerns of program representatives, families and others closest to the children in navigating a complex system. Policies and procedures will be aligned and not conflict but instead be mutually supportive of one another. This will lead to continuity and sustainability for the entire system.

Proposed Next Steps

- Develop and implement a new governance structure for early childhood funding that provides a single entity with both the responsibility and authority to ensure that all children participating in publicly-funded classroom-based early learning services in all settings—including child care and Head Start programs—receive services that meet quality standards and equitably meet children’s and families’ needs.
- Develop a cross-agency model and statement on how to successfully layer funding from various funding streams to successfully participate in Illinois’ Mixed Delivery System. Provide details related to program expectations that include specific examples of which funding streams are available to programs and their requirements.
- In partnership with the Illinois State Board of Education and Local Education Agencies, produce tools to operationalize a layered funding program such as budgeting templates. Provide technical assistance and individualized support.
- Create shared definitions and understanding of program and funding requirements that can be used across programs and funding streams.
- Determine whether different approaches to distributing funding for Preschool for All, Prevention Initiative and the Child Care Assistance Program may be needed to support more equitable and dependable access to high-quality early childhood care and education for all children, including children whose families need them to receive full-workday, year-round care.

Appendices

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Additional Data Reviewed

Many programs receiving CCAP are not all able to meet the PFA program requirement of having a director with at least an Illinois Director Credential Level II. This is especially true for small centers.

Table 3: Credentials and Qualifications of Directors at ExceleRate Gold Circle of Quality Licensed Centers

	Small Center <50 Children (N=76)	Medium Center 50-99 Children (N=144)	Large Center 100-149 Children (N=155)	Extra Large Center 150+ Children (N=93)	All Centers (N=468)
Director with IDC					
IDC I	10.5%	18.8%	27.1%	24.7%	21.4%
IDC II	28.9%	41.7%	45.2%	37.6%	40.0%
IDC III	5.3%	11.8%	1.9%	9.7%	7.1%
No IDC	55.3%	27.8%	25.8%	28.0%	31.6%
Highest Level of Education					
< Associate Degree	2.6%	2.1%	1.9%	3.2%	2.3%
Associate Degree	7.9%	6.9%	6.5%	4.3%	6.4%
Bachelor's Degree	35.5%	31.9%	49.0%	43.0%	40.4%
Graduate Degree	38.1%	54.9%	41.3%	48.4%	46.4%
Did Not Report	15.8%	4.2%	1.3%	1.1%	4.5%

There are many programs that primarily serve CCAP recipients that are not at the ExceleRate Gold Circle of Quality and/or are not participating in PFA/PI. Outreach and support to these programs would be beneficial to incrementally increase quality and move towards readiness for PFA/PI funding.

Table 4: Number of Programs and CCAP Children by ExceleRate Circle of Quality and Percent of CCAP Enrollment*

% CCAP	Licensed	Bronze	Silver	Gold	Total
Under 25%	**	107 programs 352 CCAP children	221 programs 866 CCAP children	174 programs 1,022 CCAP children	492 programs 2,240 CCAP children
25-75%	**	78 programs	162 programs	185 programs	425 programs

		1,217 CCAP children	5,165 CCAP children	9,070 CCAP children	15,452 CCAP children
Over 75%	**	107 programs 2,469 CCAP children	182 programs 6,269 CCAP children	125 programs 9,691 CCAP children	414 programs 18,429 CCAP children

- Of the 182 Silver Circle of Quality programs with over 75% CCAP enrollment, 19 (10%) had PFA funding.
- Of the 125 Gold Circle of Quality programs with over 75% CCAP enrollment, 56 (45%) had PFA funding.

In September 2018***, there were:

- 55,941 CCAP children served in licensed centers
 - 73% were ages 0-5
 - 41% of the 55,941 children were in licensed centers above the licensed Circle of Quality
- 34,176 CCAP children were served in licensed FCC
 - 55% were ages 0-5
 - 6% of the 34,176 children were in licensed FCC above the licensed Circle of Quality

** Includes licensed centers and licensed FCC only. School-based PFA are not included as data is not available to INCCRRA about their enrollments.*

*** Overall enrollment data for licensed programs not available in the dataset, so the percentage of CCAP children enrolled cannot be calculated.*

****From September 2018 CCAP payments file (based on payments for service dates June 1, 2018 or later).*

Acknowledgements

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